

The background of the cover is a photograph of a classroom. In the foreground, there are several rows of empty wooden desks with attached chairs. The desks are light-colored wood, and the chairs have dark backs. In the background, there is a large green chalkboard. To the right of the chalkboard, a portion of the American flag is visible, showing the stars and stripes. The overall lighting is bright, and the scene is empty, suggesting a quiet classroom.

*Spring 2003*

# **From Risk to Opportunity**

Fulfilling the Educational  
Needs of Hispanic Americans  
in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Summary



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# From Risk to Opportunity



As members of the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, we too look forward to the day when no child in this country is ever left behind. Over the last year and a half, we traveled around our country, listening to the hopes, desires and needs of parents and their children.

As Americans, we should all work as a nation to reach out to our children at risk and provide for them an opportunity. We witnessed an incredible vitality, desire, ambition and determination in the hearts

and minds of Hispanic Americans everywhere. The desire to provide opportunity for one's children is universal and is yearned for by the Hispanic American parents we met.

**“We look forward to the day  
that no child in this country  
is ever left behind.”**

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH, JANUARY 8, 2003

Over the last several hundred years, immigrants have testified to the promise of America by flocking to her

embrace: ours is indeed the land of opportunity for all who seek it. In January 2003, as the Commission worked to prepare this final report, the Census Bureau released new data showing that Hispanic Americans are now the largest minority group in the nation. The nation's Hispanic

American population totals more than 37 million and increased 4.7 percent from April 2000 to July 2001.

Unfortunately, we found that Hispanic students are far more likely to drop out of high school and much less likely to earn a college degree than other students. In fact, *one of every three* Hispanic American students fails to complete high school. Too many Hispanic American families lack the knowledge to fulfill the high expectations they have for their children. And, tragically, too many Americans set low expectations for Hispanic American children. Finally, the federal government does not adequately monitor, measure and coordinate programs and research to the benefit of Hispanic American children and their families, despite the rapidly growing Hispanic American population in the United States. Together, these factors contribute to the staggering dropout problem plaguing Hispanic students.

This crisis not only threatens to leave behind yet another generation of Hispanic children and youth; it also threatens their future mobility in the labor force and may threaten our country’s ability to compete economically. As the fastest-growing and youngest population group in the United States, Hispanic Americans will soon be the second largest segment of the labor force.

The economic consequences of an uneducated work force will strain the economy of the United States. Hispanics are not maximizing their income potential or developing financial security. This leads to lost tax revenues, lower rates of consumer spending, reduced per capita savings and increased social costs.

A National Response

On October 12, 2001, with Executive Order 13230, the President charged our Commission with developing an action

High School Completion Rates for 18-24 Year-Olds by Race/Ethnicity 1972-2000

Year	1972	1980	1990	2000
Totals	82.8	83.9	85.6	86.5
White, non-Hispanic	86.0	87.5	89.6	91.8
Black, non-Hispanic	72.1	75.2	83.2	83.7
Hispanic	56.2	57.1	59.1	64.1

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), *Dropout Rates in the United States: 2000*, based on U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, October Current Population Surveys, various years.

plan to close the educational achievement gap for Hispanic Americans. Over the last 18 months, the Commission met with, talked to and listened to more than 1,600 experts, parents, teachers, students and business and community leaders. The Commission then developed a six-point plan to help our nation close the achievement gap for Hispanic American children. This plan, which was submitted to President Bush on March 31, 2003, recommends that our nation take immediate steps to:

1. Set new and high expectations for Hispanic American children.
2. Support *No Child Left Behind*.
3. Reinforce and expand a high-quality teaching profession.
4. Develop a federal research agenda to identify the needs of Hispanic American students.
5. Create pathways to college graduation.
6. Create increased federal accountability and coordination.

Our urgent call to action requires that all of us dedicate ourselves to ensuring educational excellence for Hispanic Americans *now*. We sincerely hope that this report helps move America closer to that day when our Hispanic children are not at risk but are instead pursuing their dreams and their opportunities.



### The Latinization of America

The 2000 Census reports that the Hispanic population has grown by nearly 60 percent since 1990, and that more than 80 percent of Hispanics reside in California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, Arizona, New Jersey, New Mexico, Colorado and Nevada. In nearly every county for which the new census figures indicate an expanding population, the increase in Hispanic residents outpaces overall population growth. Aided by strong economic growth in the 1990s, Hispanic workers established themselves in communities ranging from Zebulon, N.C., to Dalton, Ga., to Lexington, Neb. This demographic shift indicates that it should no longer be assumed that Hispanics will remain concentrated in a handful of geographic locations within the United States.

## The Present Crisis



**A**lthough the Hispanic American population of the United States includes many distinct groups with different socioeconomic and educational backgrounds, one element remains constant: *We are losing Hispanic American students all along the education continuum.* Many problems and issues fuel the crisis, including:

- Low societal expectations for Hispanic children and youth.
- Weak early-childhood cognitive development and limited early language development due to factors in a child's home such as poverty, high transience, and limited parental time and resources.
- Lack of quality early-childhood education opportunities.
- Limited parental and community engagement and choices.
- No accountability for results.
- Poor academic instruction, particularly in reading.
- Not enough attention to using scientific research to drive instruction.
- Teachers – and college faculty – who are poorly prepared to teach Hispanic students.
- Analyses that do not distinguish among subgroups within the Hispanic American community.
- Lack of a federal research agenda that supports Hispanic students.

## Set New and High Expectations

**L**ow expectations can become self-fulfilling prophecies. Teachers and parents' expectations have a long-term, pervasive influence on children. If we are to close the achievement gap for Hispanic American children and youth and facilitate their path to higher education, parent and teacher expectations must create an environment that fosters and promotes academic achievement. And, we must begin early in the preschool years and follow through to the adolescent years and beyond.

### Commission Recommendation:

Set new and high expectations across America for Hispanic American children by: helping parents navigate the educational system, creating partnerships that can provide expanded options for children, and implementing a nationwide public awareness and motivation campaign aimed at increasing educational attainment and achieving the goal of a college education.

**Strategy:** Increase parental knowledge in navigating the educational system through outreach with parent-teacher organizations, community groups and faith-based organizations.

**Strategy:** Create partnerships among students, parents, educators, faith-based organizations and communities that can provide expanded options for the education of children. Examine the obstacles to

success that community and faith-based organizations encounter and how these partnerships may be fostered and facilitated. Devise a strategy for highlighting and adopting effective and successful community partnership models.

**Strategy:** Influence expectations by implementing a nationwide motivation campaign intended to change attitudes, intentions and behavior toward increasing Hispanic educational attainment at every step of the way: pre-K, elementary, secondary and postsecondary education.





## Support *No Child Left Behind*

W

hile Hispanic children have, in many cases, been historically underserved

within the educational system, the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 (NCLB) serves as an unprecedented opportunity for Hispanics to secure those resources and options that will prepare them, and thus empower them, to close the academic achievement gap. The importance of establishing adequate yearly progress cannot be overstated. Only through establishing a measurement of progress can we ensure that the educational needs of our Hispanic children are met. The Commission used the four key elements of the *No Child Left Behind* – accountability for results, state and local flexibility, focusing resources on proven educational methods and expanding choices for parents – as the criteria by which it evaluated the education of Hispanic children and youth.

### Commission Recommendation:

The Commission strongly supports full implementation and full enforcement of *No Child Left Behind*. The Commission challenges the states and school districts to, within five years, increase the percentage of fourth graders reading at or above proficient on the National Assessment of Educational Progress by 30 percentage points and meet or exceed the annual measurable objectives defined in each respective state's accountability plan.

**Strategy:** Support federal, state and local efforts to fully implement and rigorously enforce NCLB.

**Strategy:** Ensure that Hispanic families receive culturally appropriate information, guidance and tools that stress the importance of early-childhood development and early-childhood reading skills, and reinforce the continued expansion of reading ability during the early grades.

**Strategy:** Decrease school attrition.



Sixty percent of fourth-grade Hispanic American students performed below the basic level in reading achievement compared to 27 percent of their non-Hispanic white peers.

— 1998 Reading Report Card, National Assessment of Educational Progress



## Reinforce and Expand a High-Quality Teaching Profession



Whether a classroom is in a one-room schoolhouse or in a large urban school, an essential ingredient for educational success and robust student achievement is a knowledgeable and dedicated teacher. Consequently, *No Child Left Behind Act* requires every state to ensure that there is a qualified teacher in every classroom by the 2005–2006 school year. Every child deserves highly qualified teachers, but too often the least experienced and least qualified teach minority and low-income students. When teachers have high expectations for every student, we believe all Hispanic students can make significant gains.

### Commission Recommendation:

Reinforce a high-quality teaching profession by more fully preparing all teachers to address the diverse needs of their students, including Hispanics, those with disabilities and those with limited English proficiency, by attracting more Hispanics to the teaching profession and by providing incentives and compensation for successful performance as evidenced by improved student achievement. Launch a national study of the curricula, practice, student teaching experiences and the models used to integrate these preparation formats employed by colleges of education to prepare educators for reading instruction of diverse children.

**Strategy:** Encourage colleges of education and school districts to undertake two critical missions: First, ensure high-quality teacher preparation that prepares teachers for their

"Our new education reforms ask a lot of America's teachers – and we owe them something in return. We owe them our respect. We owe them our support. And, we owe them the training and the tools to succeed."

— U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige

role as educators of Hispanic children. Second, develop measurement and accountability systems to ensure teacher quality is linked directly to student achievement.

**Strategy:** Encourage colleges/schools of education and school districts to recruit, prepare, reward and retain more Hispanic American teachers.

**Strategy:** The U.S. Department of Education, possibly with other federal agencies, should conduct or commission a study of the curricula and methods used by U.S. colleges of education to prepare teachers to teach children to read, with a special emphasis on the importance of preparing teachers to deal with children of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

**Strategy:** Create an award that would confer special recognition for those teacher preparation programs that contribute in demonstrable ways to reducing the educational disparities between Hispanic and non-Hispanic white students.

## Develop a Federal Research Agenda to Identify the Needs of Hispanic American Students

**F**or years, research studies have found that Hispanic children are disproportionately represented among those who have difficulty in school in reading, mathematics and general educational attainment. However, much of the information that has shaped education policy regarding the education of Hispanic American students lacks scientifically rigorous answers.

### Commission Recommendation:

Initiate a new coherent and comprehensive research agenda on the educational development of Hispanic Americans across the educational spectrum, from preschool through postsecondary.

**Strategy:** Initiate federal research in four key areas affecting Hispanic children and youth:

- Educational attainment,
- Student attrition,
- Special education, and
- Teacher and service provider preparation.



## Create Pathways to College Graduation

**T**oday, about 10 percent of Hispanic Americans graduate from four-year colleges and universities, with fewer than 100,000 graduating each year. This rate has persisted for almost three decades despite the fact that, over a comparable period, up to 60 percent of Hispanic students graduate from high school and more than 40 percent enroll in college immediately after graduation (Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics). Clearly, a significant number of Hispanic students who walk through the doors of our nation's institutions of higher education are not walking out with a college degree.

Among the Hispanic Americans who do complete high school, 52.9 percent pursue a postsecondary education immediately after graduation compared to 65.7 percent of non-Hispanic whites.

— U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics

The Commission fully understands and embraces the promise that *No Child Left Behind* holds for closing the educational achievement gap and for producing more academically qualified Hispanic high school graduates. NCLB will hold states, schools and educators accountable for



## Create Pathways to College Graduation

producing results. Accountability also should be extended to institutions of higher education. Colleges and universities must bear a greater responsibility for increasing the number of Hispanic students who enroll in their institutions and ultimately graduate with a four-year degree.

### Commission Recommendation:

Ensure full access for Hispanic American students to enter college and demand greater accountability in higher education for Hispanic graduation rates. Challenge the nation's postsecondary institutions to graduate 10 percent more Hispanic American students from colleges and universities each year, than are currently graduating, over the next decade. Urge institutions to explore the increased devel-

opment of retention programs that would benefit Hispanic American students.

**Strategy:** Promote a college-track curriculum through innovative initiatives such as the State Scholars program to prepare more Hispanic American students to attend the nation's colleges and universities. Increase Hispanic participation in Advanced Placement courses, and develop and implement a secondary school guidance counseling system that can meet the needs of a diverse student body.

**Strategy:** Assist Hispanic students and their families to understand the college financial aid options.

**Strategy:** Encourage postsecondary institutions to develop new retention strategies that help Hispanic Students.

**Strategy:** Encourage strategic alliances between community colleges and four-year institutions, which would better serve Hispanic students.

**Strategy:** Build capacity among postsecondary institutions for increased numbers of Hispanic American students.



## Create Increased Federal Accountability and Coordination



he Commission urges the federal government to take steps to ascertain whether all federal education programs and initiatives are inclusive of Hispanic Americans. Little monitoring now exists. The current reporting emphasis only on minorities does not produce the information needed to determine whether Hispanic Americans are adequately served. The federal government must do a better job of disaggregating participant data in order to determine whether the educational needs of Hispanic Americans and other ethnic groups are being served. The federal government must be more inclusive. As part of its work, the Commission designed the elements of a monitoring system for use by federal agencies and departments.

### Commission Recommendation:

Increase the accountability and coordination of programs within the federal government to better serve Hispanic American children and their families.



**Strategy:** Implement a monitoring system to measure and hold federal departments and agencies accountable for coordinating efforts to ensure the participation of Hispanic Americans in all federal education programs.

**Strategy:** As part of the federal monitoring system, disaggregate data on participants served to account specifically for Hispanic Americans.

## What You Can Do



The Commission shares a deep and heartfelt urgency regarding the closing of the educational achievement gap for Hispanic Americans. Our plan recognizes that the effort must be pursued by parents; faith-based and community organizations; and business leaders, educators and public officials at the local, state and federal levels. Here is what you can do:

### Parents

- Set high expectations for your children and encourage them to pursue academic interests.
- Read to your children at every opportunity and help them with their homework.
- Involve yourself directly in your children's education. Get to know your children's teachers and learn all you can about their school.
- Learn about the new parental empowerment options under *No Child Left Behind* such as public school choice and supplemental tutoring.
- Visit [www.nochildleftbehind.gov](http://www.nochildleftbehind.gov) and [www.yesican.gov/yosipuedo.gov](http://www.yesican.gov/yosipuedo.gov) for information on preparing Hispanic children for college.

### Educators

- Set high expectations for each and every student.
- Aggressively implement the *No Child Left Behind Act*.
- Seek appropriate education interventions for Hispanic American students.
- Monitor program effectiveness and build accountability across the education spectrum, from pre-K through college.

### Government, Community & Business Leaders

- Support local and state efforts to implement *No Child Left Behind*.
- Encourage, support and aid those groups that are already engaged in efforts to increase Hispanic educational attainment.
- Consider new education options for your community, including faith-based partnerships.
- Work to coordinate state and local education policies with *No Child Left Behind*.





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